

MACAULAY'S USE OF LITERATURE

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the popular ballad, the printed satire, and the lampoon which circulated privately in manuscript or was clandestinely printed. They are three very different kinds of evidence—witnesses of very different degrees of credibility. The popular ballad is usually the expression of a general feeling, the satire often purely a partisan production or perhaps a literary exercise, the lampoon usually the off-spring of private spite. Macaulay refers to the printed and unprinted satires and lampoons of the Jacobites against William III ; they are worthless as evidence either of his reputation or his character and serve merely to prove the malignity of party malice at the time and its indifference to truth. Naturally Macaulay does not attach the slightest value to them. 'The Jacobite verses were generally ~*# too loathsome to be quoted/¹ On the other hand, he v says, ^f The impression which the bluntness and reserve •j of William and the grace and gentleness of Mary had made on the populace may be traced in the remains of the * ^ street poetry of that time/ and he gives a good example.² 75 For some notorious trait of a public man's character a line in a ballad may be good evidence. Macaulay attests the arrogance and brutal manners of the Earl of Rochester x^ by a verse from Lamentable Lory.³ A lampoon may be

"^ used to attest the leanness and ghastliness
of Danby :

' He is stiff as any stake,
And leaner, Dick, than any rake :
Envy is not so pale ' says the poet.⁴

But to go a step further and use these touches
and traits as
materials for building up a conception of a
historical
character is somewhat dangerous. Macaulay
after draw-

¹ III, 1418, n. (xi).

³1, 465, n. (iv).

² III, 1358, n. (xi).

* IV, 1796, n. (xv).